Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) Report 1623 - September 19, 2008

Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1623 with a release date of Friday, September 19th, 2008 to follow in 5-4-3-2-1.

The following is a Q-S-T. Hurricane Ike hits Texas and ham radio is ready. Also, Australian ham T-V to go digital, an electronics show is raided in Germany and D-Star comes to a remote corner of the world. Find out where on Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) report number 1623 coming your way right now.

(Billboard Cart Here)

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RESCUE RADIO: HAM RADIO FACES HURRICANE IKE

Amateur radio was ready when hurricane Ike made landfall on the East Texas coast on Saturday, September 13th. Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF is in the newsroom with a look at the storm and the work of the nations ham radio community during and after the storm:

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Ike came ashore on Galveston Island packing driving rain and wind gusts in excess of 110 miles per hour. It flooded thousands of homes and businesses, shattered windows in Houston's skyscrapers while knocking out power and telephone service to millions of people. Cellular telephones reportedly became all but useless. But ham radio continued to operate throughout the storm and was the first to report the results of Ike's landfall:

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Audio is available in the MP3 version of this weeks newscast dowbloadable at www.arnewsline.org

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That was Jim Sellers, N0UAM, in Springfield, Missouri, who was in control of the Voice over Internet Severe Weather Net. This was one of a pair of severe weather nets that played a key rile in tracking Ike. The other was the Hurricane Watch Net with hits home on 20 Meter SSB and an alternate frequency on 40 Meter SSB. With long distance propagation on the high frequency bands not very good, the VoIP Net played a significant role in gathering information for the National Weather Service as the storm made its way up toward the North:

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Audio is available in the MP3 version of this weeks newscast downloadable at www.arnewsline.org

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Meantime, back along the Texas and Louisiana coastlines, Ike began to spawn a series of tornadoes as reported on the VoIP Net by then net control Richard Long, KF6BKA, operating from Nashville, Tennessee:

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Audio is available in the MP3 version of this weeks newscast downloadable at www.arnewsline.org

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Even with poor propagation, some stations in Texas were able to pass along information on the High Frequency bands, This transmission was recorded using the N2JEU Internet controlled remote receiver in upstate New York:

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Audio is available in the MP3 version of this weeks newscast downloadable at www.arnewsline.org

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Unfortunately the signal dropped back into the noise before we could get his callsign, but he was among many hams involved in keeping the information on Ike flowing.

As word of the immensity of Hurricane Ike became known, the staff at ARRL headquarters in Connecticut began to plan for its aftermath. Anticipating that communications staffing requests would expected to exceed resources in the Hurricane Ike recovery areas the ARRL began planning the coordination requests for additional ham radio personnel. These would be volunteers from adjoining and near-by states out of Ike's path but close to Texas and Louisiana. Meantime, hams involved in the emergency continued to handle information requests from across the region:

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Audio is available in the MP3 version of this weeks newscast downloadable at www.arnewsline.org

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By late Sunday, September 14th, Ike had been downgraded to a Tropical Storm was moving out of Texas. Both the Hurricane Watch Net and the VoIP Nets were secured and it was time for relief efforts and damage assessment to begin.

And in another report coming in on Tuesday, September 16th, members of ARES South Texas District 14, were are manning at least six Points of Distribution in Harris County Texas. These operators were and possibly still are providing communications between the National Guard units at the distribution centers and the Harris County Office of Emergency Management, to coordinate the delivery and re-supply of food, water and ready to eat meals to Ike's victims. Ironically, most of the participating amateurs are also victims, having suffered property losses and expected power outages to last approximately three weeks.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, in the newsroom in Los Angeles.

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The story of Hurricane Ike and its aftermath will be with us for some time to come. We will have more on the role of ham radio in post storm relief efforts in next weeks newscast. In the meantime, if you happen to hear any on the air ham radio relief communications please tape it and send it to us for inclusion in future Hurricane Ike reports. (ARNewsline(tm) the ARRL and various other sources. Audio via the VoIP Weather Net and the N2JEU remote receiver)

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RADIO SCAM ALERT: WEBSITES PFISHING THE FCC

It appears as if someone or a group of someone's is trying to scam the Federal Communications Commission out of some money. According to news reports attorney Harry Cole told Radio World that his firm advised the commission last week that it found two fake Internet sites that are attempting to misdirect those licensees trying to pay their regulatory fees online.

The fees in question are due on September 25th. In a press release the FCC said that the phony websites are reportedly trying to collect financial information. The agency is urging regulatory fee payers to make any Internet payments directly through the commission's authorized Internet site. It also says that its Inspector General is looking into the matter. (RW)

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RADIO LAW: W3NYI WINS TOWER BATTLE

Some good news for a Pennsylvania ham what had been fighting to keep his tower and antenna. Word that Chuck Mills, W3NYI, will be able to keep his tower after all. Amateur Radio Newsline's Mark Abramowicz, NT3V, has more:

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A few weeks ago here on Newsline, we told you the story of Chuck Mills, who lives in a small town east of Pittsburgh.

Mills was granted a permit and then had it lifted by Penn Township officials after neighbors complained about his plan to erect a 53-foot, tilt-over, crank-up tower in his development.

American Radio Relay League volunteer legal counsel Michael Lazaroff, K3AIR, stepped in and tried to allay concerns of the township officials.

But, when Lazaroff tried to meet all concerns raised by the township in a second filing for a permit, he got a call from the township's attorney that the second application would likely be denied.

But that didn't stop Lazaroff.

He told the township attorney that the small community could be facing a very expensive legal fight which he predicted it would lose if it denied the second permit.

Lazaroff also noted a story in the local press reported the township treasurer complained that the municipality already had exhausted its legal budget for the year handling Mills' appeal hearing.

In an email to Amateur Radio Newsline, Lazaroff says he heard nothing more about Mills' second application.

But, Lazaroff's research into state law found language stating any building permit application not acted upon within 15 business days is automatically granted.

Lazaroff tells Amateur Radio Newsline he sent the township a letter citing the statute and advising officials that any interference in the timeline would result in an immediate lawsuit.

Two days after the 15-day period expired, Lazaroff says Mills received his permit.

Meanwhile, legislative remedies to prevent future problems like the one Mills faced are making their way through Pennsylvania's state House and Senate.

As of this week's deadline, the Pennsylvania Senate was preparing to pass a bill barring municipalities from interfering with amateur radio tower installations.

The bill contained an amendment mentioning a possible height restriction for certain townships, but left it open to legal interpretation whether any restriction would have to be followed.

The Pennsylvania House has a similar bill - without the amendment - awaiting action.

Those lobbying for passage of the bills say there appears to be a broad base of bi-partisan support for addressing the issue.

We'll keep you updated on the progress in future reports.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Mark Abramowicz, NT3V, in Philadelphia

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Needless to say that Mills is happy that the fight is over. (W3WN, ARNewsline(tm))

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BREAK 1

From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline,

heard on bulletin stations around the world including the WL7CVG repeater serving South-central Alaska.

(5 sec pause here)

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RADIO CHANGES: AUSTRALIAN ATV REPEATER TO GO ALL DIGITAL

A fast scan Amateur Television repeater in Australia will be among the worlds first to go fully digital. W-I-A newsman Rob Carmichael, VK3DTR, speaks with the ham who is making it happen:

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(ROB VK3DTR) Good morning, I have with me Peter Cossins VK3BFG who has some very interesting news about the Melbourne ATV repeater.

(PETER VK3BFG) Yes Rob- the plan is to digitise the output of VK3RTV on Mt Dandenong which services Melbourne and Geelong. The project will use German made commercial modules and a linear amplifier
to convert this repeater to digital transmission.

(ROB) Sounds interesting, how will we be able to pick up the digital TV signals?

(PETER) That will be very easy by using the now readily available set-top boxes that convert the off air digital signal so they can be seen on an ordinary analogue TV receiver.

(ROB) Sounds very interesting indeed and I bet it will encourage more people to get involved. When will it happen?

(PETER) That's right Rob, it should stimulate more activity on ATV. The plan is start the project in December and its completion will depend on securing the necessary funding.

(ROB) Thank you Peter. Now back to our studio.

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Newsline will be following this interesting ham radio digital television conversion as it progresses. (WIA News)

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: DTV ENTERING THE HOME STRETCH

And speaking about digital television, the FCC has issued a new report on the status of the digital build out by full power television broadcasters It shows that over 96 percent of active full power television stations are either fully operational with digital service or are on track to have their full digital service operational by February 17, 2009.

Here are the numbers. Some 1,002 stations which is 56 percent of a current total of 1,798 active television stations reported that they have fully constructed their post-transition DTV facilities and are ready for the DTV transition. The only step remaining for these stations is to terminate analog operations on or before next February's analog cutoff date. (FCC, CGC)

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ENFORCEMNENT: $18,000 FINE AGAINST TEEN IS CANCELLED BY THE FCC

The FCC has dismissed an $18,000 fine levied against a Largo, Florida teen they identify only as John Doe due to his age. This after the youth who now in state custody told the agency that he had no income to pay. Amateur Radio Newsline's Bruce Tennant, K6PZW, has the rest of the story:

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As previously reported , back on August 24, 2007, the United States Coast Guard contacted an agent from the Tampa Office, who was en route to locate the source of the false distress calls received by that maritime service. The Coast Guard told the FCC agent that it had used direction finding to determine that the false distress calls were coming from a location in or near a mobile home community in Largo, Florida. The Coast Guard also told the agent that the Largo Police Department had just apprehended a student who lived in this mobile home community and who had several radios. This included a marine band transceiver in his bedroom that was connected to a 12 volt marine battery and whip antenna.

Later that day the teen confessed to the Largo Police Department that he had stolen a marine radio from a boat and used it to make five false distress calls to the Coast Guard from his bedroom.

The Largo Police Department arrested our John Doe on charges unrelated to the false distress calls. It also confiscated one marine radio, two CB radios, a marine battery and a whip antenna from his residence. On August 30, 2007 the FCC confirmed that the marine radio confiscated from the teen could in fact operate on maritime channel 16.

On April 30, 2008, the Tampa FCC Office issued a Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture to John Doe in the amount of $18,000. This, for the apparent willful and repeated violation of Sections 301 and 325 of the Act.

John Doe did not submit a response to the notice, and this past June 30th the Enforcement Bureau released the Forfeiture Order. Soon after, our John Doe submit a petition for reconsideration of the Forfeiture Order. In his pleading he expresses sincere remorse for his actions. He also requested a reduction or cancellation of the forfeiture, because it would pose a financial hardship.

In his filing he explained that he was only a sixteen-year-old, that he has never had a job and has no sources of income. He also noted that he has been in the custody of the state of Florida and in a juvenile detention facility since this past February .

After examining the financial documentation submitted by this John Doe, the FCC concluded that cancellation of the forfeiture is warranted. This, based solely on his lack of income and the fact that he is currently in the custody of the state.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline. I'm Bruce Tennant, K6PZW, reporting.

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Because of the seriousness of the violation, the FCC did admonish this young John Doe for his willful and repeated violation of Sections 301 and 325 of the Communications Act. (FCC)

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ENFORCEMENT: INVESTIGATORS RAID BERLIN ELECTRONICS EXPOSITION

And some enforcement action of a different sort. This as authorities in Germany confiscate electronics that they believe to be patent violations. Amateur Radio Newsline's Jeff Clark, K8JAC, is here with the details:

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German criminal investigators have confiscated a substantial amount of electronic equipment from the IFA Conference in Berlin. According to Media Network, the items seized include at least 170 TV sets, 140 MP3 players, 60 DVD recorders and 43 car radios.

Media Network days that the manufacturers of the goods are suspected of infringing patents. The majority of the items were manufactured in the Pacific Rim. Among them were such big names such as Hyundai IT, whose display of flat screens was removed by the investigators in full view of the public.

Although criminal investigators have visited IFA shows before, this is the first time that they have operated on such a massive scale. About 200 enforcement personnel are believed to have been involved in the enforcement action.

I'm Jeff Clark, K8JAC.

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The Berlin IFA Conference ran through Wednesday, September 3rd. (MediaNetwork)

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RADIO LAW: STATION NOT TO BLAME FOR CAR ALARM FAILURES

Car alarms going off can be annoying, but for a broadcaster it's even worse
when your radio station gets blamed for it.

Take the case of WRBQ-FM in Tampa Florida. According to the Tampa Tribune, the FCC says that the station which operates on 104.7 MHz uses a frequency that may contain a harmonic. One that could possibly be the same as the frequency used by some car alarms.

The Tampa Tribune reported last week that a radio stations signal may be causing some alarms going to either go off or stop working. But says the FCC, the station is not in violation of any law since it says that the car alarms in question are required to be designed to accept and reject any interfering signals.

And not everyone is convinced that WRBQ is the cause. The newspaper said that some think the problem could be traced to a local police radio system or even wireless phones. Well let you know if we hear more.
(RW)

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D-STAR NEWS: D-STAR COMES TO THE AZORES

D-Star has come to one of the remotest points on the globe. This, with word that the first D-Star repeater in the Azores Islands is on the air.

The CQ0DAH dash B D-Star repeater is located on Santa Bï¿½rbara Mountain on Terceira Island. It operates on UHF Channel RU576, with a transmit frequency of 438.450MHz and receive frequency of 430.850MHz, transmitting 25 watts out.

The adoption of D-Star in a remote outpost like the Azores is very significant since ham gear is not easy to come by in that part of the world. What it also seems to mean is that the D-Star digital system is quickly becoming the world standard that will eventually replace analog F-M for ham radio ham radio utility repeater communications. This, even though its only supported by Icom with most other manufacturers having turned their backs to it or trying to push alternatives that the ham radio community is showing little interest in adopting. (D-Star Remailer)

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THE SOCIAL SCENE PNW VHF CONFERENCE IN OCTOBER

The Pacific Northwest VHF Society will host their 15th annual conference . This, in Moses Lake, Washington, from October 3rd to the 5th.

Joe Taylor, K1JT, the astrophysicist who won the Nobel Prize in Physics for his discovery with Russell Alan Hulse of a "new type of pulsar is the keynote speaker. Taylor is best known in ham radio as the developer of WSJT software for VHF meteor scatter communications.

Other scheduled events include technical programs, presentations, and round-table discussions as a part of the formal program of speakers. There will be an informal swap meet in the parking lot.   More information about the conference is on-line at www.pnwvhfs.org (VHF Reflector)

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BREAK 2

This is ham radio news for today's radio amateur. From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline with links to the world from our only official website at www.arnewsline.org and being relayed by the volunteer services of the following radio amateur:

(5 sec pause here)

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A WORD FROM SUPPORT FUND ADMINISTRATOR ANDY JAREMA, N6TCQ

This is Andy Jarema, N6TCQ, Newsline Support Fund Administrator. This would normally be the spot in the newscast when I'd be able to make some thank-yous to those who help us keep the news coming your way, but our producer has informed me that there's just too much breaking news happening this week for me to do that.

Rest assured I'll be back in future weeks, but in the mean time I'd just like to say that these reports require us to go get the news, it doesn't come to us. There will be an address at the end of this newscast where you can help us to help keep you informed, or you can do it through PayPal on our official website, arnewsline.org. Thank you, and as they say: now back to the news. (Support Fund)

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NAMES IN THE NEWS: AMSAT BOD MEMBERS SEEKING NEW PRES

Some names in the news. First off is word that AMSAT North America has elected three people to its Board of Directors, but is in search of a new president. As a result of the 2008 Board of Directors election, Tom Clark, K3IO, Lou McFadin, W5DID and Gould Smith, WA4SXM will serve on the AMSAT BOD for 2 years. The alternate is Bill Ress, N6GHZ. (ANS)

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NAMES IN THE NEWS: W1GPS WONT RUN FOR ANOTHER TERM AS AMSAT-NA PRES

Meantime, current AMSAT President Rick Hambly, W2GPS, has notified the organizations Board of Directors that he is not a candidate for President for the upcoming year. Hambly has served as President of AMSAT since October 2004.

To fill Hambly's position the members of the new Board will then begin a formal search process to recruit and select a new President. This process is expected to take several weeks with the goal of having a new President identified prior to the AMSAT Board of Directors meeting on October 23, prior to the AMSAT Symposium in Atlanta. (ANS)

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NAMES IN THE NEWS: NEW IRTS NEWS EDITOIR - EI8JB

The Irish Radio Transmitters Society has appointed Charles Carolan EI8JB as the new News Editor. Carolan resides in Navan having moved there from Dublin. Although his EI8 call is relatively recent, he was first licensed while living in Canada as VA3IRL back in 1995. Carolan to take over from Mark Wall EI7IS. (GB2RS, Southgate)

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EMERGING HAM TECHNOLOGY: CW SKIMMER SPARKS DISCUSSION

Its new, exciting and can make C-W operation a breeze. We are talking about a new Morse reception assistance program that is so advanced that it has the world of Amateur Radio talking. Jim Linton, VK3PC, reports:

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CW skimmer makes paddles go further?

Like virtually all sports, amateur radio does have its controversies and a current one is called the CW Skimmer, but what is it?

A clever piece of software developed by Alex Shovkoplyas VE3NEA, the Canadian who is also behind the DX Atlas and a number of other ham radio programs.

CW Skimmer receives and decodes signals and graphically shows them as a band map on a computer screen, listing stations by callsign and frequency.

The software obviously can help to more easily find stations, which could be very useful during a contest of a DXpedition.

Meanwhile Pete Smith N4ZR is pushing for listening centers to be set up using the software to create a 'reverse beacon' network.

CW Skimmer is sparking lots of debate as to whether it's just a new innovation that should be embraced by radio amateurs, or outlawed by ham radio contest rule makers.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Jim Linton VK3PC.

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The bottom line is that C-W Skimmer is here, people are using it. And like it or not you cannot regulate mans ingenuity nor can you turn back the sands of time. (WIA News)

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HAM RADIO IN SPACE: SOUTH AFRICAN HAM-SAT MAY LAUNCH BY YEARS END

Another ham radio satellite may be on-orbit soon. According the Russian Federation TASS news agency the South African Amateur Radio satellite

Sumbandila could be launched this year.

The TASS report quotes the head of the Federal Space Agency Anatoly Perminov as saying that Sumbandila is likely to be launched into orbit as the associated pressures along with a Russian spacecraft known as Meteor-M. Meteor-M is currently scheduled for launch by the end of 2008. (Southgate)

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HAM RADIO IN SPACE: THE SUDAN AGAIN ON THE BIRDS

The Sudan is once again active on the Amateur Radio Satellites. This, with word that ST2NH is operational from Khartoum. To request a scheduled contact please contact Nadir via the email address given in his entry at QRZ.com. (ANS)

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ON THE AIR: CELEBRATING STEAM IN THE BRITISH ISLES

On the air. Word that special event station GB2STI will be operating 'Railways On The Air' event the weekend beginning on Saturday, September 27th. This, from the excursion platform of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland at Whitehead. The station will be operated on 80, 40 and 20 meters by members and friends of the Antrim and District Amateur Radio Society as part of the celebrations of the first steam passenger train to operate in the British isles. A special QSL Card will be available for all contacts made during the event. QSL via GI0KPF at his callbook address. (GB2RS)

**

ON THE AIR: NEW SOLAR BEACON DOWN UNDER

And something interesting from down-under. A new solar powered QRP beacon is operating on a frequency of 3 point 686 MHz with an output power of only 90 milliwatts. The transmitter feeds a half-wave dipole and is in a horse stable at Beverly, an historic settlement in Western Australia's wheat belt country. That's about 130 kilometers east of the city of Perth.

So far it's been heard in VK2, VK4 and VK6. Its owner is Barrie Burns, VK6ADI. He welcomes any and all reception reports via e-mail to vk6dir (at) bigpond (dot) com. (WIA News)

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DX

In DX, HA3JB in Morroco will activate the new callsign CN2IPA of the "International Police Association" from September 21st through October 5th. Gab will use CW, RTTY, PSK, SSTV and some SSB and plans to take part in the CQDX RTTY Contest. QSLs should be sent via his homecall and count for the International Police Association award.

And F6AJA, wants to remind everyone to visit the Les Nouvelles DX web page to see more than 5,700 old QSL cards in several different albums and galleries. The URL is LesNouvellesDX.free.fr.

F5IRO will be on Martinique from September 21st until February 2009. He will likely be using his home call portable F M using CW, digital modes and also SSB on 40, 30 and 20 meters during his little spare time on weekends after 2200 UTC. QSLs direct or via bureau.

Lastly, listen out for LA7WCA, to hit the airwaves from Svalbard as JW7WCA from September 19th to the 26th. He will be accompanied by LA8BCA and LB9UE. The three will work mostly in SSB and only some CW on 160 through 10 meters. QSL's for JW7WCA go via LA7WCA.

(Above from various DX news services)

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THAT FINAL ITEM: A COMPUTER WITH HUMAN COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

A computer system that can carry on a discussion with a human being by reacting to signals such as tone of voice and facial expression is being developed by an international team of researchers. Amateur Radio Newsline's Burt Hicks, WB6MQV, tells us about this latest experiment in artificial intelligence:

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The project is known as SEMAINE and it plans to build SAL. That's short for the Sensitive Artificial Listener system.

SAL will have the ability to perceive a human user's facial expression, gaze, and voice and then interact with the user. When engaging with a human, SAL will be able to adapt its own performance and pursue different actions, depending on the users non-verbal behavior..

Professor Roddy Cowie, from the School of Psychology, leads the team at Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland. He says that a basic feature of human communication is that it is colored by emotion. He says that when we talk to another person, the words are carried on an undercurrent of signs that show them what attracts us, what bores us and so on.

Professor Cowie says that the fact that computers do not currently do this is one of the main reasons why communicating with them is so unlike interacting with a human. It is also one of the reasons we can find them so frustrating to use. .

But SEMAINE and projects like it will change the way people interact with technology. They hope that this means that you will be talking to your computer in 20 years time. When you eventually are able to do this, Professor Cowie asks that you pause for a minute, and remember that the human sciences at Queen's University helped to lay the groundwork.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Burt Hicks, WB6MQV, in Los Angeles.

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The SEMAINE project is led by the German Center for Research on Artificial Intelligence. The other partners are Imperial College in London, the University of Paris , the University of Twente in Holland, the Technical University of Munich and of coarse Queens University in Ireland. The European Commission awarded SEMAINE a grant of 2.75 million Euros after it was ranked first out of 143 bids for medium-sized projects in the area of cognitive systems and robotics (Adapted from materials provided by Queen's University Belfast on-line release)

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NEWSCAST CLOSE

With thanks to Alan Labs, AMSAT, the ARRL, the CGC Communicator, CQ Magazine, the FCC, the Ohio Penn DX Bulletin, Radio Netherlands, Rain, the RSGB, the Southgate News and Australia's WIA News, that's all from the Amateur Radio Newsline(tm). Our e-mail address is newsline@arnewsline.org. More information is available at Amateur Radio Newsline's(tm) only official website located at www.arnewsline.org. You can also write to us or support us at Amateur Radio Newsline(tm), P.O. Box
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For now, with Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, at the editors desk, I'm Jim Davis, W2JKD, saying 73 and we thank you for listening.

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